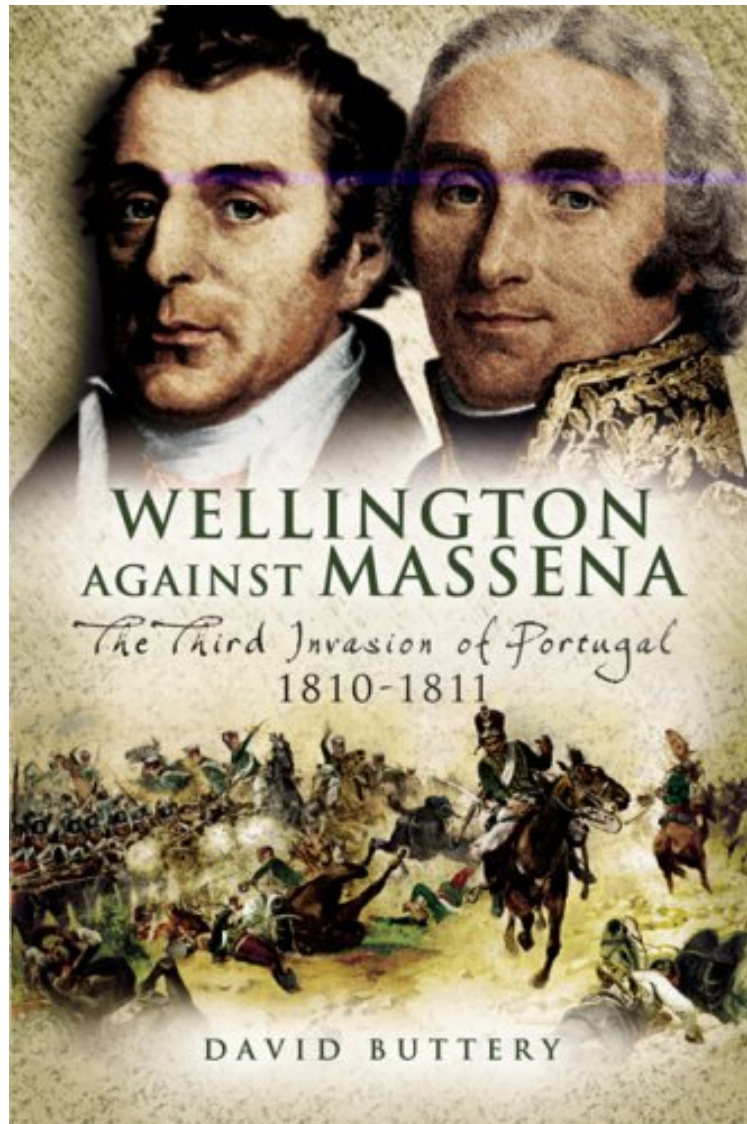


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Wellington Against Massena: The Third Invasion of Portugal 1810 - 1811

David Buttery

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David Buttery : Wellington Against Massena: The Third Invasion of Portugal 1810 - 1811 before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Wellington Against Massena: The Third Invasion of Portugal 1810 - 1811:

8 of 8 people found the following review helpful. The Duel for Portugal By HMS Warspite "Wellington Against Massena" is a very worthwhile account of the third French invasion of Portugal 1810-1811. David Buttery's 2007

entry into a crowded field of history provides a fascinating narrative of a campaign that was much closer than is usually portrayed. Buttery begins with introductions of the Peninsular War and of Wellington and Massena. These opening chapters provide context for the general reader. Massena has received rather less attention than Wellington in most accounts; his short biography reveals him to be a highly experienced field commander. The core of the book is the invasion itself. Massena was assigned only a barely adequate force for the mission, then faced significant delays reducing the border fortresses of Ciudad Rodrigo and Almeida. His advance into Portugal was further slowed by the harassment of Portuguese militia and the austere conditions of the border region. French failure to perform proper reconnaissance led to a costly defeat in the assault on Wellington's Anglo-Portuguese Army at Busaco. However, Busaco was a minor setback compared to the shock of encountering the formidable Lines of Torres-Vedra blocking the road to Lisbon. Unable to draw Wellington out of the Lines for a decisive battle, and unable to sustain his Army indefinitely in the wasteland beyond the Lines, Massena finally withdraws to Spain, with Wellington on his heels. Massena would make one final effort to right the balance, attacking Wellington at Fuentes de Onoro to raise the Allied blockade of Almeida. Buttery documents the close-fought Battle of Fuentes de Onoro as perhaps the most dangerous hour of the war, as Massena comes perilously close to flanking Wellington out of his position over three days of combat. As popular history, Buttery's book is superb. The general reader without prior knowledge of the Peninsular War will find this account clear and easy to follow. The narrative is much enhanced by a series of detailed map graphics and a nice selection of illustrations. For the student of the Peninsular War, Buttery's account is notable in its evenhanded coverage of the two principal commanders and the difficulties they faced. Both are revealed to be tough-minded opponents in a contest decided by very narrow margins. Massena may well have been physically past his prime by 1810; his inability to impose his will on his own army was not quite balanced by Wellington's comparative lack of experience. This book is highly recommended to the general reader and to the student of the Peninsular Wars.

1 of 4 people found the following review helpful. A Misguided Attempt To Write History By Gary States As the name would suggest, the focus should be on Wellington and Massena and who they were as men and commanders. What the book largely is about, is retelling the narrative of the Peninsular War from the British perspective. A chapter deals with Wellington's early life and career and then a less detailed chapter goes into Massena's life and career. Having been well acquainted with Wellington's background, nothing new was really to be revealed. With Massena, his personal life is presented in passing and it appears the author made no real attempt to find new information to present to the reader. Massena's career is well covered and this was a jewel in the mud. A major source of disappointment is the lack of written orders and correspondence from the two commanders. The documents exist showing the orders for battles and what they thought might happen, but they are not included. Inexplicably, correspondence letters between Wellington and Massena are missing. Was the author unaware of this information still existing? Why was no attempt made to find the information? And then you have errors that reflect the author's shallow understanding of the subject matter. On page 55, Napoleon is called an "inveterate warmonger" while the author goes off topic mentioning the Danube campaign. Was he unaware the Austrians started that war in 1809? David Buttery should be and he is likely allowing his British bias to show in an uncalled for deceptive statement. Later on page 160, David Buttery erroneously states that the French Imperial Guard Grenadiers were present at Fuentes de Onoro. The error originates from a British soldier who mistook the converged grenadier battalions with their bearskins as the Old Guard. A basic order of battle would have revealed the Old Guard Grenadiers were not present. On page 164, the author now downgrades them to Young Guard status. These two errors reflect on the author's ignorance of the order of battle and the sole reliance on British accounts without investigation of the source material from the other side. I refused to keep track of all the errors, so let these stand out as some of the obvious ones in the work. The author concludes the book somewhat abruptly dealing with Massena's request to decline presiding over Ney's trial and rather short life after the war. For Wellington's conclusion, it somehow escaped mentioning the details of The Iron Duke's loss of social standing and attempt to steal Napoleon's mistresses, chef etc. Again, is the author unaware or avoiding harmful information? Massena's love of money is mentioned in multiple places in the book, but Wellington's cold and harsh personality is really glossed over by being mentioned only in passing. Again, this is where physical correspondence letters to subordinates and even opponents would have been invaluable to turning Wellington into a human being instead of a statue with a few human traits. The book was a major disappointment on many levels. The book does include a generous list of "references", but if an author doesn't fully understand the subject matter or has some intent on rewriting history, then the sources cannot be cited as evidence when they are misused. I walk away from this experience confused over the author's motive being improper or was he simply ignorant and felt if he used enough sources, he could pull off a good book? Anyone familiar with the theater would pretty much be aware of the battles so did not need them being retold without new information being presented. Having read all seven volumes of Charles Oman's *A History of the Peninsular War*, gives me a higher understanding of the events and perhaps raised my hopes. With all of this said, I would not recommend the book. Promoting the usual bias and rehashing old material with a new cover doesn't lend itself to being very useful for anyone researching the topic. The shallowness of the two commanders presented in a book with them as the subject is misleading at best. An amateurish work I wouldn't even donate to a public library. What a shame. The author had an attempt to do real research using archived material and

giving these men depth and life and he chose to cut corners by using already published works - errors and all. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Massena takes on Wellington By Betsy Interesting account of the 3rd invasion of Portugal by French troops under Marshal Massena. Massena, who had a reputation as a fine soldier, made several mistakes in his effort to defeat the Anglo-Portuguese Army. The two major battles of the campaign, Bussaco and Fuentes de Onoro, cost tremendous casualties for both sides, but the surprise of the Lines of Torres Vedras and the infighting among the French generals took their toll as well. Glad I read this book.

Wellington's clash with Massena was one of the most remarkable contests between two commanders in the Peninsular War. These two formidable generals carried on a campaign of maneuver, battle and attrition across Spain and Portugal in 1810 and 1811 which had a decisive impact on the outcome of the war. Wellington's reputation was enhanced, Massena's was ruined. David Buttery's close analysis of this extraordinary encounter offers a penetrating insight into the personalities of these two outstanding soldiers. Using a variety of sources, in particular eyewitness accounts from both sides, he reassesses the famous confrontations at Ciudad Rodrigo, Almeida, Busaco, the lines of Torres Vedras and the final bitterly fought battle at Fuentes de Oñoro. He sheds new light on this pivotal episode in the Napoleonic Wars and his account corrects the one-sided view of the campaign that has survived to the present day. In particular he reconsiders the true cost of the scorched earth policy that was employed against the French